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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005446

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS, PM/DTCC -- BLUE LANTERN COORDINATOR
(JSTITZIEL)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ETTC](#) [KOMC](#) [TH](#) [BLUE LANTERN](#)

SUBJECT: BLUE LANTERN LEVEL 3: PRE-LICENSE END-USE CHECK ON
APPLICATION 05-972741

REF: SECSTATE 151249

11. Per reftel request, POL FSN made inquiries into the bona fides of Somboon Firearms Ltd and determined the following information.

Somboon is registered with the Thai Ministry of Commerce, Department of Business Development as:

The Somboon Firearms Co. Ltd.
Capital Registration 240,000 Baht
The registration lists 8 partners in the concern:
Ms. Suwanna Laohaphiangsak with shares worth 10,000 Baht
Mr. Suphat Laohaphiangsak with shares worth 40,000 Baht
Ms. Rattana Laohaphiangsak with shares worth 40,000 Baht
Mr. Chaiwat Laohaphiangsak with shares worth 40,000 Baht
Mr. Thanin Laohaphiangsak with shares worth 80,000 Baht
Ms. Ubon Laohaphiangsak with shares worth 10,000 Baht
Ms. Wanthani Laohaphiangsak with shares worth 10,000 Baht
Ms. Suphanni Laohaphiangsak with shares worth 10,000 Baht

Manager of the Company is Ms. Suwanna Laohaphiangsak
Address: 111 Nakhon Sawan Road, Wat Sommanat Sub-District,
Pomphrap Satruphai District, Bangkok
The Company has submitted annual financial reports for the
years 1999-2004

12. Pol FSN met with Mr. Prawet, Chief of the Shop Permit Section of the Thai Ministry of Interior's Department of Provincial Administration, Bureau of Investigation and Legal Affairs, Public Service Center. Prawet provided copies of permits from his Ministry allowing the import/purchase of 10 .357 revolvers by Ms. Suwanna Laohaphiangsak of the Somboon Firearms Co. Ltd. The documents provided by Mr. Prawet concur with those in reftel. Prawet was unaware of the USML and its restrictions but, after being briefed on its requirements, said that, according to Thai law, a non-Thai who lives in Thailand for more than six months is allowed to buy a gun and is able to take that gun out of the country via appropriate customs procedures. However, the foreign buyer has to pass the same state background check that a Thai national must pass.

13. Pol FSN made an unannounced visit to Somboon and described it being located in a five story combined residential/office building beside a main road near a police station. Pol FSN noted no security guard, no CCTV, and no iron grill on the first floor window. The office was closed but a char employed there was present. The building had no sign or symbol identifying it as a gun shop. The domestic employee explained that the building was for administrative purposes and that weapons ordered by Somboon are actually stored and sold by Rattana Fireworks Ltd, a subsidiary of Somboon.

14. Pol FSN visited Rattana Firearms Ltd (address 105 Charoen Krung Road, Unakan Intersection, Wamb Burapha Sub-District, Phra Nakhon District, Bangkok 10200/ Tel 02-221-4638) The enterprise is located in a neighborhood with a number of gun shops. Rattana has four employees and one CCTV inside the shop and two cameras outside. There was a guard present when Pol FSN visited but no iron grill on the front window. There, he met Ms. Suwanna Laohaphiangsak, Manager of both the Rattana and the Somboon Firearms companies.

15. Ms. Suwanna presented copies of her permits from the MOI which concur with those outlined in reftel. She also presented another set of MOI Permits set to expire on June 18, 2006 allowing the establishment/registration of Somboon Firearms Ltd. and permission to sell firearms. Ms. Suwanna confirmed the accuracy of the business registration at the Thai Ministry of Commerce outlined above and the Somboon Firearms purchase/import order No. D035/05 SW signed by her on July 27, 2005, prepared by Smith and Wesson's distributor in Thailand, the Louis T. Lednowens Co., Ltd.

16. Ms. Suwanna related that she and her seven brothers and sisters altogether own 32 gun shops, including Somboon, and that each shop is allowed to sell 30 pistols/revolvers, 50 rifles, and various types of ammunition to total about 50,000 rounds annually.

17. Other questions raised in reftel:

How long has the company been in business and who are its principles?

The Somboon Firearms Ltd. has been in business since 1975, but Ms. Suwanna's family has been in the gun business for over 50 years. Principles are listed above, all members of the same family.

Who are its typical customers and where are they located? Thai citizens -- civilians, police, soldiers, state officials. Before buying a gun, a customer must obtain a license to purchase a weapon from the MOI's Gun Registration Section and pass a background check.

Does the company have an established, legitimate customer base to which it plans to sell these firearms.

Any Thai citizen with the appropriate license may purchase from Somboon.

Does the company keep proper, detailed records?

Yes. All licenses and records of buyers and guns sold are well documented both at the shop and at MOI. These are kept in hard copy only (not computerized).

Does the company understand the restrictions of the USML articles?

Ms. Suwanna seemed well versed in the restrictions. She noted that Thailand's own gun regulations are strict and that any foreigner wishing to buy a gun must have the a Residence Permit and his Embassy's approval in addition to the requirements outlined for Thai nationals.
BOYCE